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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

William Allen

MR. CLAY'S DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES AND MEASURES FOR GENERAL HARRISON'S ADMINISTRATION, REVIEWED IN A LETTER FROM MR. SENATOR ALLEN OF OHIO, TO T. J. MORGAN, CHAIRMAN OF THE YOUNG MEN'S STATE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF OHIO.

WASHINGTON CITY, July 23, 1842.

MY DEAR SIR: Your obliging letter of the 8th instant came to me several days since; and would have been immediately answered, but for the pressure of business with which I could not dispense.

I should be gratified, I assure you, were it in my power to attend, as you invite me, the Young Men's State convention, of the 28th instant. I should be gratified for other reasons; but especially so that I might there be able to take once more by the hand hundreds of the noble spirits whom it is my pride to call personal as well as political friends, and with many of whom I became first acquainted when traversing the State, to offer my little aid in the contest of 1838, and in the more terrible struggle of 1840. But the madness of the dominant majority seems likely to make this session of Congress as long as it has already made it odious; and I have, therefore, no prospect of being present in person. In soul and in sentiment, however, I shall be with the democracy then, and always, whilst I have reason enough left to appreciate the value of freedom.

When the convention meets, it will find the federal government, for the first time, brought down, by its own acts, in sixteen months of the profoundest peace, to a point of distress as low and humiliating as could well have resulted from the most protracted and disastrous war. This great calamity is the first-born offspring of federalism, since it assumed the name of whigery, and embodied its principles and its passions in the form of a national administration.

For many years prior to 1840, the leaders of that party had been busily collecting into a common focus all the diseased elements of society. In that year they found the public mind fretful and restless. They found thousands discontented, whom the reaction of their own system of currency and credit had ruined. They found banks, bankruptcy, indolence, avarice, rapacity, impudence, venality, profligacy, cupidity, and fraud, all standing ready to league with ambition for the power and plunder of the country. The league was formed, and every feeling of the human heart that lay within the reach of terror or corruption, was then stimulated into revolt against the democratic party. The prices of all things were suddenly reduced, because the politicians had prompted the banks thus to aggravate the public distresses, by the reduction of their discounts and circulation. The people were openly treated with contempt by the brutality of the appeals made to their senses. Fraud and folly, the most criminal and ridiculous, were employed to distract their attention, bewilder their minds, and mislead their action. To affect their imaginations, everything, from the gorgeous ensign of the republic, with its stars and stripes streaming from its halyards, down to the skin of the most loathsome skunk, was displayed to the popular eye. Globes and cabins, banners and bushes, barrels and brutes, harangue and music, revelry and feasting, the song and the bottle, imprecations, blasphemy, badges, and buffoonery—all things that could minister to confusion, were made to chime in the general din. Reason was silenced in the turmoil; and truth, for once, in our country yielded its empire to falsehood, fraud, and

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frivolity. If these leaders condescended, for a moment, to speak seriously to the people, it was but to denounce things as abuses which did not exist, and to make pledges of reform they never intended to fulfil. They deplored the scarcity of money they had themselves occasioned, and promised abundance on their accession to power. They condemned removal from office for the sake of opinion, and invoked Heaven to witness that this practice should cease. They promised the unfortunate a reparation of his fortunes—the laborer an increase of his wages—the farmer an addition to his prices—the hopeless of every description the gratification of being soon surprised in their despondency by the timely bounty of government, to be distributed among them. To the nation at large, they promised opulence and contentment, the restoration of law and order, the healing of all wounds, the restitution of all rights, the reparation of all wrongs, the cure of all ills, the remedy of all disorders, the observance of all obligations, the reduction of all burdens, economy in all things, security, plenty, and happiness to all men. Thus was excited every passion of our nature, to its extremest limit, by all the means which the joint energies of ambition and rapacity could employ. Thus was the public heart torn and lacerated —the public mind stung and goaded; and thus was an administration, conducted by men of honor, ability, and patriotism, undermined and overthrown by the most stupendous conspiracy that ever yet was levelled against the liberties of a free people.

What has been the result?

On the 4th of March, 1841, the whole power of the country changed hands; Mr. Van Buren and his friends retired without a murmur, and gave place to General Harrison and his. The event of the contest had for months been known; and, from that moment, proscription for opinion ceased to be a crime. Throughout the land, one wild and universal cry was heard for the blood and bread of the democrats in office. Before he had left the banks of the Ohio, the President-elect was beset by intruders without number, and importunities beyond the power of gratification. On his arrival in the capital, he found it already besieged by thousands, who had trooped together from all parts of the Union, to demand of him the spoils of a conquered country. There was an impatient ferocity in their looks, like that of a rapacious soldiery when restrained for a moment from the sack and plunder of a subjugated city. He was a man scarred with the infirmities of age—of a heart, I believe, that found no pleasure in the passion of revenge; and therefore, when left to himself was disinclined to inflict, without cause, upon so many men, the miseries of a general removal. But neither his infirmities nor his feelings were respected by his victorious partisans; and, on the very first day of his power—within ten minutes after the official oath was administered, and whilst he was yet descending the eastern portico of the Capitol—his friends in the Senate admonished him of the haste he was expected to make in the execution of vengeance, and the distribution of spoil, by submitting in that body the following resolution:

Resolved, That Blair & Rives be dismissed as printers to the Senate for the twenty-seventh Congress.

On the seventh day after, this resolution was passed; and thus were these defenceless citizens—without a crime, or even a charge against them but that of their opinions—deprived of their contract solemnly made with the Senate, their bond annulled, and all the expenses they had incurred to execute the work, thrown as a dead loss upon them. Here was an example the President was expected to follow; and from that day, to the day of his final affliction, whether in his mansion or in his walks, in public or in private, under all circumstances, and at all time, the office-seekers still clustered around him. It was not the plea of his infirmities, or that of his arduous duties: nor was it the lifting of his time-withered hand with a gesture to retire, that could remove

the dense mass who pursued and importuned him. In spite of all these, they followed him up, swarming upon him still thicker every hour, until, at last, like hornets, they stung him to death. Nor were the terrors of a death-bed, or the solemn condition of an expiring man, sufficient to silence their clamors, or stay, for an instant, the removals his subordinates were making in his name. For, upon the authority of that name, though insensible himself, and sinking to the grave, the more cruel of his counsellors continued to swing the axe of execution, as if determined that the last mortal sound which broke upon the ear of the dying President should be—not the sound of prayer, or the filial sob, but the distressful scream of a victim, struck down in his presence. And even after his death, and the translation of his remains from the capital to the West, democrats were spurned from office, upon the sole allegation that he, in his life, had intended their removal.

Such was the first result; and what was the next?

They had declared the country ruined by democratic councils. They had declared the single object of their own advent to be its immediate redemption. Yet, notwithstanding this, no sooner did they find themselves all-powerful, and the people all-powerless, than they began to disclose other objects, far different from that—objects, in their tendency, ruinous to every interest they had promised to foster, save the interests of the few against the rights of the many; and blasting to all the hopes they had labored to excite, save the hopes of the rapacious, for the plunder of the government. But to disclose such objects was dangerous, if their execution was delayed. It was important, therefore, (and well they knew it,) to forge and rivet their system of measure upon the country, whilst the public mind was yet feverish and flighty, from the inflammation of the recent struggle. Strike whilst the iron is hot, was the signal passed to his followers, by him who spoke for the whole, and whom all obeyed. Let not the people cool down; but now, while the glow and giddiness of triumph are upon them, let us rush to the capital, and there, in the midst of the general glee, bind and clinch our system on the nation.

This, it seems, was the policy which prompted the convention of Congress, in extraordinary session, on the 31st of May, 1841.

On that day the extra session, commenced; and then it was that those measures were proposed, which express the real motives of the leaders, and which have brought the government and the country to their present condition. They were then victors over the whole field of power. With the executive—with a majority overwhelming in both branches of Congress—there was nothing to restrain the full sway of their pleasure or their principles. This they knew, and this they felt; and therefore it was, that their chief in the Senate, with all the swaggering indelicacy of one unaccustomed to success, openly proclaimed to the democracy of the body that we had been condemned by the judgment of the people—had been brought together only for execution; and that all we uttered was to be heard as nothing but the complaints of malefactors on their way to the scaffold. Such was the delirium of meritless triumph and vulgar revenge with which the federalists began their work; who, without preparing anything in its stead, laid hold upon the sub-treasury, and tore it to the ground. Thus did these infatuated men—they who had most falsely charged the democratic party with having committed the public treasure to the sole custody of the executive—with having united in his person both the sword and the purse,—thus did they, among the very first acts of their power, do, themselves, the very same thing so unjustly ascribed to others, by the repeal of the only law which placed the money of the nation out of the reach of the President. No bank, no law, no resolution, had they passed, to take the place of the act repealed. No is there, to this day, any such provision, or any such likely to be, while the present Congress remains.

And why is this? If the majority cannot get the fiscality they desire, can

they not pass an act to secure the revenue? or do they intend to leave it, as it is, exposed to the hazard of official pillage, in order to try, once more, the coercion of the people into a national bank?

These men came into power, as we are told, upon the holy mission of guarding the sanctity of the constitution, the law, and all human obligations. So pious was their reverence for the observance of contracts, that some of their number were willing that this government, though penniless itself, and plunging in debt, should assume the debts of the States, rather than witness their repudiation. Nevertheless, these very same men, the chosen and the anointed guardians of all things sacred, by one general act, with the name of bankruptcy for its caption, repudiated the debts of the larger debtors throughout the entire nation. By his single oath, they allowed the interested party, if his debts were large and his means considerable, to cancel his bond; and thus to ruin the friend or the neighbor who, as creditor or security, had confided in his honor. I say, if the debts were large: because, if small, and the debtor poor, the expense of the process makes the law unavailable, and, therefore, a nullity to him. To execute the act, the federal judiciary passes over the constitution, usurps the rightful jurisdiction of the local courts, and defies and spurns the sovereignty of the States. But no matter for that—the greater bankrupts, the magnificent millionaires of the paper system, were brought to bankruptcy—not by misfortune in legitimate trade—not by accident beyond the power of discretion, but by the eagerness of an avarice seeking to gratify itself in the gamblings of speculation, and then wasting, in splendid profusion, all that the fortune of the hazard placed within its reach. As men already ruined and desperate, they had entered the contest of 1840, with the pledge of the federalists that their debts should be treated as gambling obligations, and sponged by the law and an oath. And this pledge alone, of the many made, has federalism faithfully fulfilled.

Economy, let it be remembered, had been promised as a policy proper in itself, and especially so in the then necessitous state of the treasury; and yet, by this very convention of Congress, at a time not appointed by the law, three hundred and ninety-one thousand dollars were wasted in the payment of its members, and other expenses of the session.

Twenty-five thousand dollars were next bestowed, as a gratuity, upon the widow of the late President; and this without any request from her, or necessity found in her pecuniary circumstances. So far from any such necessity then existing, or likely to exist, it was a fact well known and declared at the time, that the private fortune of that respectable lady placed her above the humility of asking such favors from any quarter whatever. Still, the money was voted from the treasury, as if taxes were nothing to the people, and waste the duty of the government.

At its last session, which closed on the 4th of March, 1841, the preceding Congress had made all the usual and needful appropriations, and provided the means for the public service of the ensuing year. But, regardless of this—regardless alike of the condition of the country and of their own promises, so solemnly given, the ruling majority in the present Congress proceeded but three months after, and before one-third of those appropriations were expended, to appropriate, for the service of the very same year, an addition of *five million and forty-three thousand dollars*. The name of economy was no longer heard, but when pronounced by the democrats, to remind the federalists of what they had pledged, and to rebuke them for what they were about. Heedless of this, the leaders, who projected these measures, seemed but the more diligent to discover every excuse for extravagance, that could find impunity in the general pretext of the public good.

But those who expend, must also accumulate; and, in the case of government, taxes and loans are the chief sources of supply. Hence it was that after,

by this additional expenditure, they had effectually picked the very bones of the treasury, they next turned their attention to the increase of the taxes. Here was a nerve to be touched, that ran through the body of the people; and therefore it was important to prepare them for the shock, by the soothing process of distribution. They had left in the coffers of the government not an unappropriated dollar. The ordinary income was short of the extraordinary outlay. Taxes, had they been sufficient in amount, came in too tardily to meet the rapidity of expenditure; and to borrow, became, consequently, the only immediate resource. This state of things was known and acknowledged, because brought about by the ruling majority. What then did they do? In aggravation of these evils, and as if fatally bent upon the utter bankruptcy and ruin of the government confided to their care, they proceeded to snatch every dollar accruing to the treasury from the public domain, and to cast it away in pittances to the States. No consciousness of its folly, no barrier in the constitution, no "beggarly account of empty boxes" from the Treasury department, no terrors of a national debt, could possibly arrest them in this. Nor was the injustice of augmenting taxes, when the means of the people to pay were diminishing, sufficient to retard, much less to prevent, this profligate waste of the nation's resources. Distribute they would; and that, too, at the hazard of the public execration. They confided in the craft of the scheme, and were willing to risk its exposure. One dollar was to be given by the government, through the States, to the people; and for that, three paid back, by the people, through the custom-house, to the government. The people would see, and might be tempted, by the amount they received; that which they paid was to be taken from them, in the dark and at a distance. The first process was to be direct and visible—the second, circuitous and obscure; and it was upon this obscurity that the federalists relied for impunity against detection in the impostnre. The act of distribution was therefore passed; and then, in an instant after, the same men who passed it urged that very act, by which the land revenue was thus excluded from the treasury, as an additional reason why the taxes upon the people should be immediately increased. A tax of *six millions of dollars* was accordingly added, in the form of tariff duties, to the burdens before imposed upon the nation.

But, in view of the lost revenue distributed, the vast appropriations already made, and those intended for the future, even this increase of taxes would prove inadequate. A loan of *twelve millions of dollars* was, therefore, authorized upon the credit of the people, and the pledge of their farms and workshops for its payment, principal and interest. This, it was supposed, would, together with the taxes and treasury notes already afloat, afford a fund sufficient to feed, for the present, even the extravagance of the ruling power. A national debt would, it was true, with all its evils, be the inevitable consequence. So much the better; for such a debt, instead of being a reason with federalists why they should economize the public income, has ever been, and yet is, with them, of all reasons, the very strongest for the most boundless prodigality of expenditure. And therefore, with this infatuated affection for a public debt, they were not to be satisfied with the twelve million loan as a beginning; but on the contrary, they proceeded immediately to add *sixteen millions* to that—the last being intended as the basement stock of the fiscality—a national bank more hideous, infinitely, in all its features, than was the former institution, whose conduct, decay, and dissolution, have appalled the world, have doomed to penury so many families, and imparted so much impurity to the social and political morals of the country.

Nature never abandoned men absolutely to their own indiscretion; for, even in the gross confusion of public affairs, she often interposes her silent authority to check the dominant power in a state, whenever it threatens to inflict a degree of misery she never intended mankind should endure. Out of the bosom

of the whig party, therefore, the veto sprung, to strike down the forthcoming monster, whilst yet in its fœtus condition. The presiding magistrate had received the sceptre from the hands of that party, but not upon the condition of perjury and dishonor. He felt that he owed some allegiance to the constitution of his country; and, as it was the constitutional veto which alone intercepted the bank and the debt the majority desired, they resolved to attack the constitution itself, and the President who had dared to support it. Thus far, upon that point, he still stands firm. How long the constitution shall stand, remains for the people and the States to determine. It is enough that the nation now knows full well the designs of the federal leaders, their principles, their measures—the measures of their ambition and profligacy, as thus displayed, in an extra session of three months and fourteen days' duration, and which closed its memorable labors on the 13th of September, 1841.

Congress commenced its present session on the 6th of December, 1841, and, up to the date of this letter, has continued, without intermission, for seven months and seven days. It will adjourn some time or other—but not, I presume, until the master majority shall have more effectually (if that be possible) exhausted their own passions and the patience of the people, as well as the resources and credit of the government. When they assembled, that silent but thorough revolution, which is now perfected in the public mind, had then greatly advanced, as was visible in the popular elections. Upon almost every battle-field where, in 1840, they triumphed, they have since been routed by a people indignant at having been so shamefully betrayed. Full one half of their numbers, both in the Senate and in the House, now find themselves unsupported—their principles and their measures sternly condemned by the States and districts that sent them here. In federalism, however, this has produced no change. From the beginning of the present, it has continued the policy of the extra session, and yet continues to pursue that policy, with all the preternatural energy of despair—as though resolved, during the brief futurity of its power, to stamp upon the country, as deeply as possible, the dark impress of its baleful genius. With these views, the party have proceeded. They have authorized an additional loan of *five millions of dollars*. They have added *five millions* more to the treasury notes previously issued. But these, with those of the extra session, are still not enough; and, therefore, another tariff has passed the House, and will as certainly pass the Senate, imposing *thirteen millions* more of taxes upon the country. Thus, every article from abroad—all things that minister to the wants of men—tea, coffee, whatever is most needful to the poorest citizen,—each one and all now yields its tribute to fill yet fuller the already distended maw of insatiate power.

And yet, after all this—loans, taxes, and treasury notes—how stands the treasury itself? Still empty! How stands the public credit—the credit of this great government—the credit of that never once sullied when democracy presided,—how stands it now? Down; and still hopelessly sinking down lower, by far, than that of any respectable farmer in Ohio—treasury notes, if not at interest, depreciated, with no prospect of rising—the governments drafts daily protested and dishonored—its bonds hawked about in the market, and returned without a bidder; and the government everywhere, and in all forms, treated as an insolvent.

Appropriations, nevertheless, go on as profusely as ever—quite as much so as though the treasury were full, and absolutely exhaustless; for, from the amount already passed, and that pending with the certainty of passage, it is manifest that this will, at the end of the session, bear its full and just proportion to all the other limbs of their monstrous system.

Claims—some the most base, and others the most baseless—are now presented against the government, and treated with the serious respect due only to the just demands of the honest citizen. The holders of such claims seem to

have discovered a mutual sympathy between the majority of this Congress and themselves. They repair of the Capitol with the instinct that directs the vulture to the carcass.

The militia of Massachusetts—they, the very same who, during the late war, when the country was invaded, and they ordered by the President into the public service, positively refused obedience—refused to pass the line of their State—refused to pull a trigger in the defence of the republic—they who, by that very refusal, encouraged the British, allowed them a lodgment in a Massachuchusetts seaport—they who traflicked with, instead of fighting, the public enemy,—they have, nevertheless, lived long enough to laugh in secret at an American Senate for having, twenty-nine years after, voted to them the *third of a million* from the national treasury, for *these their services* in the *late war*. These men, who in any other country would have been treated as traitors, are, in this, about to be paid in money for their treason, by the very government they betrayed.

Next come the heirs of General Hull, with their demand for the *salary* of their father, as governor of the Territory of Michigan, *during the very time, and for no other time*, that the territory was in the possession of the British—surrendered to them, together with the gallant army from Ohio *by Hull himself*,—a crime for which he was then under arrest, and afterwards condemned by the law to *death, as a traitor*. Yet this claim, the very presentation of which was an outrage to every American citizen, and especially so to the citizens of Ohio, whose heroic people had thus been, by this very man, so basely surrendered to the enemy as prisoners of war,—this claim found favor in a whig committee in the Senate, was advocated upon the floor, and defeated only because *some* of that party, and all the democrats, were ashamed to dishonor the body by its passage.

But economy and justice—federal economy and justice—were, with that very same committee, found a sufficient bar to the repayment of the fine imposed by a vindictive judge on Andrew Jackson, for having expelled traitors from his camp during his glorious defence of New Orleans.

If these things were not on record, no individual should state them, as the word of no man would alone be deemed, by the country, conclusive of facts so derogatory to the character of the American Congress. Yet facts they are—and of record, too—whosoever may be injured by them.

Amidst the systematic policy of public ruin which this Congress has pursued, it has introduced, for the first time, a practice in the highest degree dangerous to the liberties of the people. I allude to the practice of the House in gagging the minority; and that of the Senate in veiling from the public eye the real condition of the government. In both, the democratic majorities are powerless. The federal majorities direct all action—hurry or retard all business, at pleasure. It is in the House that the great money bills chiefly originate. There, they have been studiously kept back for month after month. In the mean time, as an excuse for delay, debate has been encouraged on matters of indifference. Then, all things being ready, those great measures have been suddenly brought up; and, after the most trivial discussion, the gag applied, and the voice silenced, under the ridiculous pretext of a want of time. On such occasions the democracy are hushed, not by the previous question, but a stern resolution which seals the lips, and forces through the measure without consideration, however important its provisions, and without the exposure of its enormities, though destructive it may be to the best interests of the country. Thus have millions been appropriated, and taxes by the million voted in the very last month of our seven months' session, without one single man of the minority in the House having had time enough allowed him to expose the impolicy or enormity of such measures. But in matters of no moment, no gag is applied, because in these the freedom of speech endangers neither corruption nor despotism.

To silence the representative, is to spike the ears of the people. It is both their right and his that he should speak. It is theirs, because it is their business he is doing. It is his, because he is responsible for what he does. Their safety consists in making him explain the reason of his votes—his, in being able to do so. Silence and secrecy are to despotism, as are speech and publicity to freedom—the two strongest elements of its power, and only guardians of its safety. It is for these reasons that I regret the closing of its doors, by the Senate, in the matter of nominations—a practice indefensible by argument, and excused only by its antiquity. But to suppress resolutions of inquiry, seeking from the Treasury Department the facts of its actual condition—and that, too, at the time when money-measures of the first moment—tax, loan, and appropriation bills are all pending, and all relating directly to those very facts;—to suppress such resolutions, as did the federal majority in the Senate, is nothing less than to compel men to legislate in the absence of all reasons for the votes they give, and to withhold from the people things of the most serious import to them. Those who hide, will excite suspicion; and this practice of suppressing facts, had it been adopted by any other Congress, would have attracted the attention and incurred the frown of the country. But so many are the objects of just alarm with which this Congress has filled the public mind, that the people very naturally feel the more solicitude to see its session brought to a close, and the evils it still threatens thus arrested, and to recount those which it has already irretrievably inflicted upon the nation.

There are three great measures—two of Congress and one of the executive—the "apportionment bill"—that for "remedial justice"—and the interposition in the affairs of Rhode Island; each, as I believe, infracting the constitution in several particulars, and invading alike the sovereignty of the States and of the people. They are measures of vast magnitude, and threaten to their authors a terrible futurity. They are the iron frame of a despotic system, never before set up in this country—a system which, if allowed to stand, will prove a Bastile to the liberties of the nation. But such measures excite reflections that swell beyond the limits of a letter; and I therefore name, only to mark them for the future.

For sixteen months and nineteen days has this government been confided to the federal party. During every hour of that time, (save five months and nineteen days,) has a federal Congress been in session—and here still it is, moping ing and feeling about, amid the ruins itself has made, to find some other object of waste or destruction. In the mean time, the democratic minorities in the two houses have done all that men could do, who were in the power of others, to mitigate the evils the majority were entailing upon the country. But, being powerless as to numbers, they could effect but little by argument or remonstrance, addressed to men who would listen to neither reason nor experience.

You must, my dear sir, excuse the length of this letter, and be assured that I am, in great sincerity, your friend,

W. ALLEN.

Maj. T. J. MORGAN, Ch'n Young Men's State Central Committee.

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